

Dec. 13

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Note to the Secretary-General

MEETINGS WITH HEADS OF STATE IN LOME IN THE MARGINS OF THE ECOWAS SUMMIT (9-10 DECEMBER)

A. Meetings with Presidents Konare and Obasanjo

1. As part of my consultations with ECOWAS Heads of State in the margins of the ongoing Summit Meeting, I paid courtesy calls on President Alpha Oumar Konare of Mali (the incoming Chairman of ECOWAS), and on President Olusegun Obasanjo of Nigeria today, to seek their views and guidance on a number of outstanding issues relating to the situation in Niger, Guinea Bissau, Sierra Leone, Guinea and Liberia, and Cote d'Ivoire, in particular the fate of the military juntas, the current threats to the implementation of the Sierra Leone peace process, efforts towards reactivating the Mano River Union, and the widening rift between President Henri Konan Bedie and former Prime Minister of Cote d'Ivoire Allasane Ouattara. I was accompanied by SRSF Francis G. Okelo.

2. While acknowledging the significant progress achieved by ECOWAS leaders in tackling major challenges facing the subregional organization, in particular implementing the Lome Peace Agreement, and ensuring restoration of constitutional order in Niger and Guinea Bissau, I brought to the attention of the two Presidents the United Nations' deep concerns about the far-reaching implications of the following developments:

i) Fate of the military juntas in Niger and Guinea Bissau: I underlined that for the electoral process in Niger and Guinea Bissau to result in genuine restoration of democracy and constitutional order, there was a need to grant adequate positions to the heads of the military juntas in those countries in order to secure their strict adherence to the democratic rule! In this connection, I explained to the two Heads of State that the military junta in Guinea Bissau seemed unwilling to relinquish power, as shown by its demand that the incoming President should clear with the junta the appointment of the Prime Minister and the Prosecutor General;

ii) Peace-consolidation efforts in Sierra Leone: I stressed that every effort should be made to resolve the Sam Bockarie's issue by granting him a position likely to secure his full cooperation in the implementation of the Lome Peace Agreement. I also emphasized the need for President Kabbah to be more proactive in the conduct of the peace process.

iii) Reactivation of the Mano River Union: I underscored the need to build on the momentum generated by the last mini Summit meeting held in Abuja with a view to dispelling suspicion between Presidents Lansana Conte of Guinea and Charles Taylor of Liberia.

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ROUTING SLIP		FICHE DE TRANSMISSION
TO:		
A: Mr. Riza		
FROM:		
DE: Ibrahima Fall		
Room No. - No de bureau S-3570A	Extension - Poste 3-049	Date: 13 December 1999
FOR ACTION		POUR SUITE A DONNER
FOR APPROVAL		POUR APPROBATION
FOR SIGNATURE		POUR SIGNATURE
FOR COMMENTS		POUR OBSERVATIONS
MAY WE DISCUSS?		POURRIIONS-NOUS EN PARLER?
YOUR ATTENTION		VOTRE ATTENTION
AS DISCUSSED		COMME CONVENU
AS REQUESTED		SUITE A VOTRE DEMANDE
RETURN		RETOURNER
FOR INFORMATION		POUR INFORMATION

MESSAGE:

Please find herewith, for the Secretary-General's attention, a note on my meetings in the margins of the Lome Summit (9-10 December 1999).

cc: The Deputy Secretary-General
Mr. Miyet

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v) Rift between President Bedie of Cote d'Ivoire and Alassane Ouattara: I underlined that the Ivorian Authorities were yet to realize that, if allowed to persist, the widening tussle between President Henri Konan Bedie and former Prime Minister Alassane Ouattara could develop into a destabilizing factor with unpredictable ramifications in the West African sub-region.

Meeting with President Oumar Konare of Mali

3. I conveyed to President Alpha Oumar Konare your greetings and warmest congratulations on his impending assumption of the chairmanship of ECOWAS, as well as your wishes for all success in discharging his demanding responsibilities. The President undertook to maintain regular contact with the United Nations in assuming his new functions as Chairman of ECOWAS. He made it clear that he will work very closely with President Obasanjo during his term.

4. On the situation in Guinea Bissau, President Konare warned that failure to accommodate an appropriate position to General Mane could result in a military coup or chaos with young officers ethnically close to Mr. Koumbayala attempting to destabilize Gen. Ansoumane Mane, as well as in the destabilization of Senegal through the provision of arms and ammunition to Casamance dissidents.

5. Regarding the peace-consolidation efforts in Sierra Leone, President Used that President Kabbah was yet to realize that he has the "exclusive transition mission" to prepare the ground for the holding of free and fair elections in this country. He also said that Sam Bockarie should be granted an attractive position to avoid that he be used as an alternative to Foday Sankoh or as a stronger supporter of the RUF leader who could stage a coup by capitalizing on his wealth, military might and growing popularity in Sierra Leone. The Malian President went on to caution that the peace-keeping arrangement in Sierra Leone involving UNAMSIL and ECOMOG not only would weaken ECOMOG but also would not work because Nigerian troops would be operating under two different conditions. He argued that in the long run, the Nigerian Government would find it difficult to mobilize and deploy troops for other ECOWAS peace-keeping operations under conditions far below UN financial standards.

6. With regard to the reactivation of the Mano River Union, President Konare emphasized that the attainment of this objective called for effective rapprochement between Presidents Lansana Conte of Guinea and Charles Taylor of Liberia, and for the holding of the next Summit meeting in Conakry instead of Freetown. He informed me that he intends to visit the region in the coming weeks to deal with the relationship between Guinea and Guinea-Bissau.

Meeting with President Olusegun Obasanjo of Nigeria

7. I reiterated to President Olusegun Obasanjo your appreciation for his personal involvement in pursuing the objectives of regional economic integration and conflict resolution in the West African region, and your call for his continued support and cooperation in maintaining the momentum of the peace process in Sierra Leone and in ensuring successful restoration of constitutional order in Niger and Guinea Bissau, as well as in helping the Mano River process initiated by him in Abuja following your discussions.

8. On the Sierra Leone peace process, President Obasanjo concurred with my view that President Ahmad -Tejan Kabbah should be more proactive and should grant Sam Bockarie an attractive position likely to secure his full cooperation in the implementation of the Lome Peace Agreement. He also indicated that he was anxious to help President Kabbah consolidate his authority so as to sustain the emerging peace and stability. On the partnership and division of labour between the United Nations and ECOWAS, the Nigerian President emphatically stated that: "There will not be two peace-keeping forces (UNAMSIL and ECOMOG) operating side by side in Sierra Leone because such an arrangement is not going to work. Nigerian troops currently operating in ECOMOG will be withdrawn as Nigeria cannot afford to maintain troops in two forces in the same theater of war under different conditions. Disparities in the treatment of our soldiers will have the potential to destroy the Nigerian army". The President went on to downplay the promise that US and UK Governments would provide the much-needed logistical support for maintaining Nigerian troops in ECOMOG. He finally suggested that one way out would be to increase the size of the UN peace-keeping force by one additional battalion from Nigeria or any other country. President Obasanjo also requested that the United Nations should assist in transporting the three fresh Nigerian battalions of UNAMSIL from Nigeria and bringing back home those troops to be repatriated.

9. When I insisted later on the risks that threaten the whole UN peace-keeping operation, if Nigeria withdraws its forces, and on Nigeria's regional responsibility, President Obasanjo who, in the meantime had a meeting with President Kabbah during which he learned that Finland was ready to give financial support to Guinea to deploy, said that if the UN could secure the same support for Nigeria he would reconsider his plan to withdraw the Nigerian security forces from Sierra Leone.

10. On the reactivation of the Mano River Union, President Obasanjo identified four confidence-building measures which should be taken to secure full compliance by Presidents Lansana Conte and Charles Taylor with the decisions adopted at the mini Summit held in Abuja, namely: i) Persuading President Lansana Conte to accept two companies within one of the three Nigerian battalions of UNAMSIL; ii) Holding the next Summit meeting of the MRU in Conakry instead of Freetown; iii) Assisting President Charles Taylor in forming a new national army; and iv) Ensuring successful completion of the electoral process in Guinea Bissau.

11. Regarding the rift between President Bedie and former Prime Minister Alassane Quattara, President Obasanjo stated that, yesterday, he told his Ivorian colleague that this rift should not be allowed to destabilize Cote d'Ivoire.

12. On the fate of the military junta in Guinea Bissau, President Obasanjo agreed that President Yahya Jammeh of the Gambia should be requested to assist in persuading General Mane to leave Guinea Bissau for a sanctuary in Nigeria, Angola or Mozambique.

13. President Obasanjo was also anxious to know about progress achieved in the efforts to deploy a UN peace-keeping force in the Democratic Republic of Congo. I explained to him your ongoing efforts toward requesting such deployment, and the possible difficulties within the Security Council members.

14. COMMENTS: I noted with interest the convergence of views between Presidents Obasanjo and Konare on all issues discussed, in particular those relating to the peace-keeping arrangement between the United Nations and ECOWAS through UNAMSIL and ECOMOG. I would assume that the two Heads of State have already had preliminary discussions on a wide range of outstanding issues relating to the overall situation in the West African sub-region. The planned visit of President Konare to Abuja in the coming weeks would suggest that the incoming Chairman of ECOWAS intends to work closely with his Nigerian colleague, as he told me, whom he considers as a determining factor in all efforts by ECOWAS to promote regional economic integration and conflict resolution.

15. The objections raised by the two Presidents to the peace-keeping arrangements require further consultations between the United Nations and Nigeria as these objections could seriously affect the implementation of the mandate of UNAMSIL. I, therefore recommend that you consider reestablishing contact with Presidents obasanjo.

B. Meeting with President Kabbah

16. On 10 December, in the afternoon, Mr. Amoako, Mr. Okelo and myself met with President Ahmad Tejan Kabbah of Sierra Leone to hear his assessment of the status of the peace process and to seek his views on issues raised in my earlier meetings with President Konare and Obsanjo.

17. Concerning the peace process, from the outset, President Kabbah expressed concern that the Humanitarian Mission which recently visited Sierra Leone from New York reported that he was too soft with Sankoh and Johnny Paul Koroma. He, therefore, explained at great length the strategy he is pursuing, which he said is intended to build confidence and trust. He stressed that Koroma and Sankoh have been in Freetown for an effective period of only a month since they delayed their return. He had found out that

their delay in returning to Freetown was due to the fact that they were scared and uncertain of the reception they would receive.

18. The President believed that his confidence-building strategy was working. He stated that Sankoh was now beginning to listen to him and added that as Chairman of the NCDDR, whatever he instructed Sankoh to do was always implemented. His Government has also intercepted a very long message in which Sankoh was reminding Bockarie that all RUF commanders had agreed to sign the Lome Peace Agreement. The President was of the view that Sankoh was very concerned about the Bockarie's issue and was trying to find a solution to it. He recalled that during President Obasanjo's visit to Freetown, Sankoh presented a list of people he wanted to send out of Sierra Leone and Bockarie was on top of the list.

19. The President cited the following as firm indications of Sankoh's sincere commitment to the peace process, namely: i) The visit by the RUF leader to the Northern province at the President's request to get his combatants disarmed; ii) Sending a strong warning to his followers not to obey orders from Sam Bockarie to join a Liberian group of fighters who were reported to be planning to attack Guinea at the behest of followers of the opposition leader Alpha Conde. In addition, the President disclosed that Sankoh has submitted to him a list of four RUF members requesting that they be prosecuted for gross violation of human rights. The President said he was suspicious that Sankoh was testing him. He, therefore, told him that they were covered by a general amnesty under the Lome Peace Agreement.

20. I inquired from President Kabbah whether Sam Bockarie's actions were motivated by his opposition to the Lome Peace Agreement or were a result of his marginalization in the implementation of the peace agreement. The President was of the view that Bockarie who had assumed command of the RUF during the two years that Sankoh was away, was now feeling "too big for himself".

21. He added that Bockarie was also reluctant to give up diamond mining and the life of luxury he was living in the bush. In addition, Bockarie feared that he would not be welcomed by the people in Freetown because of his long record of atrocities against the civilian population. President Kabbah also indicated that President Obasanjo agreed to his suggestion that President Charles Taylor be asked to invite Sam Bockarie to Monrovia in order to prevail on him to abandon his sinister scheme. The President also informed me that President Eyadema had proposed to fly Sankoh from Lome to Monrovia to discuss the Bockarie issue. Sankoh himself has sought the President's permission to undertake the trip to Monrovia at the end of the Lome Summit.

22. When I asked President Kabbah about arrangements for maintaining an ECOMOG presence in Freetown and Lungi after the deployment of UN peace-keepers, he told me that he was not very much involved in the discussions, but President Obasanjo and the

Secretary-General had briefed him on the matter. He added that the latest position was that Guinea was dissatisfied with the arrangement for his participation. President Kabbah had, therefore, instructed Minister James Jonah to talk to Finnish President Marti Artisaari to check if Finland could be in a position to sponsor Guinea's participation. President Obsanjo, in discussions with President Kabbah earlier today, has also indicated his readiness to include additional Guinean troops within the Nigerian contingent.

23. Concerning the reactivation of the Mano River Union, I emphasized the crucial importance of enhancing security and developing confidence between Liberia and Guinea. I suggested that, to this effect, the Foreign Ministers of the Mano River Union member states should meet periodically in order to create the much-needed climate. I also called on president Kabbah to pursue his efforts to secure President Lansana Conte's acceptance of suitable venue and date for the next Summit meeting of the MRU.

24. President Kabbah explained that the Mano River Union Summit meeting scheduled for the first week of November 1999, did not take place for the following reasons: i) President Taylor indicated that he would not make it at the appointed period but failed to propose a more convenient date; ii) Arrangements were agreed upon between Presidents Kabbah and Conte for the holding of the Summit meeting in Conakry, but President Taylor would not accept that venue on the grounds that his Guinean colleague failed to reciprocate the two visits he had already paid to Conakry. President Kabbah told me that he intends to pursue his efforts towards reaching a compromise solution on the venue and date of the Summit meeting.

25. With this information in mind, I later on spoke again to President Obasanjo who assured me that he would try to convince President Taylor to attend the MRU summit and that he himself would lend his support by attending the meeting in Conakry.

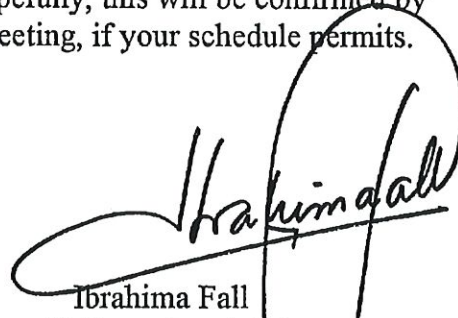
26. ECA Executive Secretary informed President Kabbah that he intends to send a mission to the three countries to find out what development programmes could be implemented and to discuss the structure and institutional arrangements of the MRU. In this regard, he indicated that a number of donors, including UK, the Dutch and the European Union have shown keen interest in supporting the reactivation of the MRU. However, he cautioned that the formulation and implementation of any development programme were contingent upon the restoration of confidence among the three member states.

C. Meeting with President Bedie of Cote d'Ivoire

27. I did not take the initiative of a meeting with President Bedie, as I had been informed by my Office that you had spoken with him on the issue of M. Alassane Ouattara. The President's own Chief of protocole came to see me (during my meeting with Mr. Amara Essy) and suggested that I say hello to the President.

28. During our talks in the plenary session room, he naturally raised the issue of Mr. Ouattara by commenting abundantly on the historical, legal and political aspects of the problem, as well as on the reasons why President Bongo was disqualified as a mediator. He also confirmed that M. Essy would soon be coming to New York, at your convenience, to brief you. *met SG on 15/12/99.*

29. I simply made one substantive remark: that at the UN, the friends of Cote d'Ivoire were concerned that the situation could degenerate and therefore wanted a speedy and peaceful resolution. I added that it is with this objective in mind that Mr. Essy's visit will be more than welcome. His reaction was positive and he seemed to be open to any discreet action you may want to take to help. Hopefully, this will be confirmed by Mr. Essy. I would like to meet you before that meeting, if your schedule permits.


Ibrahima Fall
13 December 1999

cc: Mr. Prendergast